

# College kid!

**Price: £139** **Vox Cambridge 15:** This legendary British name falls between the solid-state and all-valve stools with a new hybrid 15-watter

**T**HE NEW MILLENNIUM has ushered in a fresh series of Vox amps. Manufactured in Korea, the range comprises the wholly solid-state Pathfinder and three Cambridge combos, of which this is the most petite.

Of course, both the Pathfinder and Cambridge monickers first appeared in the 1960s, but these new models are not what you would call re-issues.

The new Cambridge series comprises the 15, the 30 and 30 Twin which all represent a foray into the heady world of hybrid amplification. Each boasts a 12AX7 valve in the preamp section and all offer tremolo in the classic Vox tradition controlled by two



Versatile and useful controls, plus tremolo

separate speed and depth pots. The 15 doesn't feature reverb, which is a slight shame, but it has no problem in offering a switchable – using the optional VFS2 footswitch – gain boost, designed to heap dirt upon dirt.

Interestingly, in these fashionable days of scooped mids, Vox have actually gone in the other direction. The Cambridge's mid-range boost switch actually increases the level of these frequencies and is a quick and easy way of fattening up those single-coil tones, especially at bedroom type volume levels.

Round the back, I was pleasantly surprised to find a variety of features; a headphones out, a line out and, most importantly, an 8 ohm extension speaker output.

Speaker cabs can be picked up for next to

## The rivals

• Marshall VS15R	<b>£128</b>
• Laney LC15	<b>£185</b>
• Fender Frontman 15G	<b>£79</b>
• Orange HD15/10	<b>£409</b>

nothing at the moment and this is the most direct route to using this amp both at home, in the rehearsal studio and on stage.

## Sounding out...

For a perfectly clean tone, set the gain pot to zero before you do anything else and, once in position, the basic tone is excellent indeed – it never fails to amaze me what a difference such simple a piece of outmoded electrical equipment can do.

Yes, the single 12AX7 makes all the difference, giving clean settings, especially with the Mid Boost engaged. What you get is beautifully warm with a contrasting sparkly feel. Genuinely impressive.

The gain pot adds the heat almost immediately, so it's worth using your guitar's volume pot as an additional regulator and, although the crunch tone does not compete well with an AC30 running flat out (remember the NMS last year?), what you get is a more than useable standard.

The higher up the drive scale you go, especially with the gain boost thrown into the equation, you do miss a valve power amp section to take some of the edge off proceedings but, by employing the mid boost and using a 4x12 cabinet through

## Spec check

### VOX CAMBRIDGE 15

**PRICE:** £139 **ORIGIN:** Korea  
**POWER:** 15W RMS **CHANNELS:** One  
**PREAMP:** Single 12AX7 tube  
**POWER AMP:** Solid-state  
**SPEAKER:** Eight-inch Vox Custom Celestion Bulldog  
**FEATURES:** Volume and gain pots, gain boost, midrange boost, two-band EQ, tremolo, headphone out, extension speaker out, line out  
**FOOTSWITCH:** Optional Vox VFS2  
**COVER:** No **CONTACT:** Korg UK 01908 857 100  
**WEB:** www.korg.com

the extension output, I could see myself using the Cambridge in anger, especially as I don't possess enough patience to use a 'proper' Vox to its fullest capacity, like a certain Mr May.

## Value and verdict

Actually, this is a proper Vox in the true sense of the word and at a great price. £139 is a great deal whichever way you slice it, and that's bound to ensure many a fledgling indie kid goes running to his pocket money jar.

As a bedroom amp, the Cambridge is one of the best and, although Laney's LC15 has it beat on the sound front (the Laney is all-valve, but much more expensive), this little Vox is useable on most fronts.

An excellent clean tone meets a reasonable selection of drive and dirt sounds in a fab-looking package that harks back to the guitar's halcyon days. And all this at a fantastic price.

**Simon Bradley**

## VOX CAMBRIDGE 15

BUILD QUALITY	●●●●○
FEATURES	●●●●○
SOUND	●●●●○
VALUE FOR MONEY	●●●●○
VERDICT	●●●●○
<b>WE LIKED</b>	Awesome clean tone, nicely warm tremolo and drive tones
<b>WE DIDN'T LIKE</b>	I'd sacrifice a slight price increase for reverb

